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Question Time: What is the future of the NFL?

What will pro football look like in 25 years?

By Rob Burgess

Tribune night editor

[**Editor's note:** To participate in future queries, keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.]

Between the burgeoning scandals involving concussions and domestic abuse, the National Football League has seen sunnier days. Perception is changing rapidly while remaining the most popular sport in the country. So, we wanted to know: "What do you think professional football will look like in 25 years? Why?"

Your answers

"The NFL will continue to make unnecessary rule changes year after year, players will continue to make outrageous amounts of money, every season will continue to be marred by scandals (murder, DUI, abuse, drug, etc.) and fans will continue to complain about all of it just like they do now. And yet, we'll all continue to watch and root for our favorite team every week, buy our favorite player's jersey, and spend money on tons of other NFL merch. So the NFL will continue to make money, fans will continue to complain as

they spend money, and the wheels on the bus go round and round.” —

Robert Fernung

“Too expensive to attend.” — **Lillie Ditmore-Gundrum**

“There won’t be.” — **David A. Duncan**

Our answers

“In 25 years, the length of games will double as players are given time to take selfies after each play.

More and more players will leave football for boxing, in order to reduce the number of concussions suffered.

Live from a nightmarish hellscape, Tim Tebow does color commentary at the Super Bowl played in Manzel stadium.

The NFL will pay a fortune to engineer a clone mixing the DNA of Nick Saban and Vince Lombardi. Unfortunately, he’ll major in Cultural Anthropology and release a line of very successful self-help books.

One word... WNFL.

Finally caving to social pressures to protect players, the NFL will outlaw tackling, and players will be restricted to walking vigorously while encased in bubble wrap.” — **Steve Mullen**

“It will still exist. Bigger helmets (or whatever they think helps mitigate concussions), more padding, more rules, and more referees. But unless judges decide to kill it, it will exist and be the biggest sport in the land because it’s America’s biggest sport by a very wide margin, and it makes astonishing amounts of money for all involved. Football already has too many rules and too many referees (and way too many coaches per team), but it likes adding things because it creates points of discussion, and somewhere along the line, NFL football became the most-discussed thing on the landscape. Since we live in America, I can’t expect my fellow Americans to stop litigating everything. So that’s the real sticking point: will lawsuits eventually cripple the NFL and other organized sports? Or will there be a point where the government steps in, throws a warning sticker on it like they do tobacco, and then say, ‘Here are the risks, everybody have at it if you want, or don’t participate, but no more lawsuits.’ I can’t fathom a Western nation where people don’t play a whole lot of sports, and watch a whole lot of sports. Lawsuit fans will take aim at virtually all of them but there has to be blowback at some point. People put their bodies at risk because they enjoy the action. Discussing it in an abstract form makes those who are not attracted to sports (or a given sport) think it’s crazy to put a joint or a brain at risk, but in the thrill of the moment, a person will frequently put some part of their body at risk to win a single play or a whole game. Joy outweighs caution, at least some of the time.” — **Pedro Velazco**

“I think the domestic violence scandal will blow over. People want their football. I find it disgusting, but I can’t see something like that derailing this train. The concussion issue is a much larger threat, but not because people are disturbed that adults are hurting themselves for our entertainment. The results are in on the studies and the sport is still more popular than ever. What’s going to hurt is when rich and middle-class parents start disallowing their children from playing youth football because they want to protect their health. This will cripple the feeder system and turn the professional player into something akin to boxing. Only the progeny of the poorest segment of the population with nothing else to lose will be left to play. I think professional football will still be around and popular in 25 years, but I don’t think it will look anything like it does now.” — **Rob Burgess**

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